

BRIEFS

S.C. CHURCH TOLD TO CHANGE POLICY

GREENVILLE, S.C. (BP) — The South Carolina Baptist Convention has asked a member church to either reverse its decision that opened marriage ceremonies, church membership, and ordination to homosexuals, or withdraw from the state convention. First Church in Greenville voted to cease cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention in 1999. The church still cooperates with the state convention but not with the local Greenville Association.

LESBIAN TEENS HAVE MORE PREGNANCIES

ST. PAUL, Minn. (BP) — A Minnesota study that found lesbian teens are four times more likely to become pregnant than their heterosexual peers has been called a predictable reflection of the homosexual community's apparent emphasis on sexual activity. Evan Lenow, assistant professor of ethics at Southwestern Seminary, said, "This confirms what studies have shown for years. Individuals who identify as lesbian and gay are much more likely to experiment with sex and have many more sexual partners than their heterosexual counterparts. Some of these teens who identify as lesbian and gay may be simply experimenting with all types of sexual partnerships and thinking less about the ramifications of such experimentation."

GUIDESTONE GETS ENTITIES' SUPPORT

WASHINGTON (BP) — Three Southern Baptist entities have urged the U.S. Supreme Court to review a ruling against the convention's health and financial benefits organization, in a crucial religious freedom case involving the Obama administration's contraception mandate. In a brief filed Aug. 24, the International Mission Board, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, and Southern Seminary called for the high court to grant a hearing on the appeal by GuideStone and other ministries.

IMB to trim 600-800 employees

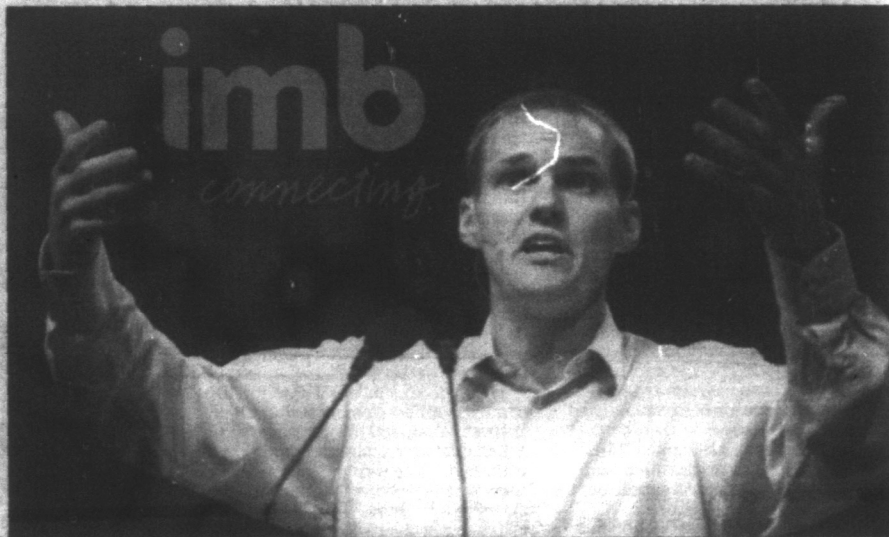
Platt: move won't affect global effort

RICHMOND, Va. (BP and local reports) — The International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention in Richmond, Va., will move forward with a proposed reduction of 600-800 staff and field personnel, but IMB president David Platt said Aug. 27 that the move should not decrease the board's Gospel impact worldwide.

"Even if our income from churches were to double over the next year... we would still have a cap on our ability to send a certain number of full-time, fully supported church planters," Platt said during an Aug. 27 telephone press conference with members of the news media.

IMB leaders "want to take that cap off" and "consider all of the different avenues that God created in His sovereign grace for multitudes more people to go," Platt said, including business professionals funded by their secular employers, students funded by scholarships to international universities, and retirees funded by their savings.

Platt's press conference, which also included the IMB's executive vice president Sebas-



DAVID PLATT (BP file photo)

tian Traeger, occurred following a town hall meeting with missionaries and staff at which IMB leaders announced a plan to balance the organization's budget by the end of 2017.

Phase one of the plan will involve offering a voluntary retirement incentive to eligible employees. Phase two will include an opportunity for other employees to "voluntarily transition into work outside the IMB," Platt said.

The issue of potential layoffs will be addressed "when necessary," he added.

IMB leaders will consider the ramifications of full-time missionary reduction for work among specific people groups around the globe based on the outcome of voluntary retirements and resignations, Platt said.

Personnel reduction is a "difficult" issue "to communicate with our IMB family," Platt said.

"These aren't just figures. These are faces. These are brothers and sisters who have spent and are spending their lives in various capacities to spread the Gospel among those who have never heard it."

Traeger said no option other than personnel reduction represented a viable method to bring expenses in line with revenue. Suspending or reducing mis-

see IMB on p. 9

Christian pastors released, return home to South Sudan



GOING HOME — South Sudanese pastors Yat Michael (left) and Peter Yein Reith have been released by Sudan after eight months in prison and a detainment that kept them from leaving the Muslim extremist dictatorship. (BP photo courtesy of Christian Solidarity Worldwide)

JUBA, South Sudan (BP) — Two Christian pastors have arrived safely home in Juba, South Sudan, after an eight-month ordeal of imprisonment on fabricated charges of capital crimes in Khartoum, Sudan, and a ban on leaving the country, Morning Star News reported Aug. 19.

Peter Yein Reith, 36, and Yat Michael, 49, were acquitted of the crimes calling for the death penalty on Aug. 5 but were prevented from boarding a plane out of the country the next day. Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) had issued the travel ban when they arrested the pastors — Michael on Dec. 14, 2014, and Reith on Jan. 11.

Although it was not immediately clear why the travel ban was lifted Aug. 19, Michael and Reith were transported from Juba International Airport to a Juba church for a service of thanksgiving. "Thank God for their arrival home," Michael's wife told Morning Star News after the service.

South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SSPEC) leaders welcomed the pastors.

An international outcry erupted over their weeks-long incarceration without charges after Morning Star News on Dec. 28, 2014, broke the news of

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Who is Ashley Madison?

My friend's wife met him at the front door one evening last week as he arrived home from work. "I've been watching the news. What do you know about Ashley Madison?" she asked rather sternly. "Um," he replied, "didn't you order a pair of shoes from them a couple of months ago?"

My friend's innocent response to his wife's very serious question may be the only comical story to come out of the mushrooming Ashley Madison scandal. If you've been in a cave and missed the reportage, Ashley Madison is a web site but it doesn't peddle women's shoes. The Toronto-based Ashley Madison web site arranges adulterous liaisons between married men and women.

The company's slogan is, "Life is short. Have an affair." Men and women who pay fees to subscribe to the web site hope to hook up with willing sexual partners outside their marriages, with the company's assurance of complete confidentiality. Complete confidentiality, that is, until a group of hackers broke in to the Ashley Madison database earlier this year and downloaded all the personal information in tens of millions of participants' accounts.

The hackers, who named themselves the Impact Team, have certainly been true to their moniker over the past several weeks as they engaged in selective data dumps that have publicly revealed the names, addresses, credit card numbers, and other supposedly confidential information contained in the compromised accounts.

Celebrities and politicians have already been found among the names. Pastors, even in Mississippi, have begun to receive calls from church members confessing that they expect to be named in one of the data dumps and wanting to know how to break the news to their spouses and families. There have been reports from Canada of suicides among named individuals.

A high-ranking employee of a Mississippi company was recently called into his boss's office and asked about his involvement with Ashley Madison. With his job, career, family, and community reputation on the line, it turned out there was another man with the identical name in the same city but with a different home address and e-mail listed on the account.

The folly of engaging in such sinful conduct was borne out in an analysis of the Ashley Madison data dumps by Gizmodo, a technology blog. Gizmodo found that many of

the female accounts were created on the same days from the same IP addresses and never used again after being registered. That means those female accounts were probably fakes.

Did the company have anything to do with the fake accounts? The Independent, a London-based newspaper, reported on August 27 that a former employee sued the company in 2012 claiming that her job was to create thousands of fictitious female accounts, and that she suffered repetitive stress injury as a result. The Independent reported that the case was settled out of court by Ashley Madison's owners.

Gizmodo concluded that only 9,700 of the five million female account holders ever responded to a message from a man offering to commit adultery with them. "The women's accounts show so little activity that they might as well not be there," wrote Gizmodo's editor-in-chief Annalee Newitz, who personally conducted the analysis.

What that means for all the men who had an Ashley Madison account is that they had less than a .002% chance of ever connecting with a woman who wanted to have an affair with them. Yet millions upon millions of men were willing to risk everything important to them in their lives for the chance.

The second observation to be made is how surprised people seem to be that so many men and women want to be unfaithful to their spouses. Really? Where have these people been for the last five decades? The country was in trouble long before Ashley Madison was invented. Ask a pastor about the biggest threat to the Christian church in America today, and he'll probably say marital infidelity. We know that's a fact. It's everywhere. So many Christians — correction: so many who claim to be Christians — are engaging in marital unfaithfulness that the divorce rate in the Christian community is virtually the same as among non-Christians. Churches, like the families involved, are being torn asunder and our witness to a lost world is being deeply affected.

Finally, remember the Ashley Madison victims such as innocent spouses, devastated children, ruined ministries, even the exposed account holders themselves. It's not our calling to send a firing squad. It's our calling to send an ambulance. The Great Physician who called us would have us do no less for those wounded in this debacle.

After what our Lord and Savior did for us, sinners all, it's the least we can do for Him.

Forward, not backward

Many Mississippians believe the current state flag should be kept because it was used in the Civil War and represents a certain view of heritage. However, we should understand the problem with the flag by casting a vision of Mississippi over the next 100 years, not by dwelling on the past.

The 1870s (end of Reconstruction) to the 1970s in Mississippi were a "second civil war" waged successfully by Southern white supremacists which was ended only by the federal government's battles against racism and discrimination, the push for civil rights legislation, and the great courage of so many blacks and whites to make changes for equality and justice.

As a teenager in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I retain vivid memories of those days.

Five items were used in this 100 years-plus reign of terror, segregation, degradation, and death. Those items were a rope for lynching, a chain for drowning, a sheet for hiding, a burning cross for intimidation, and a Confederate battle flag for championing the cause of white supremacy.

The images of these items remain disturbing today. Those items were tools in the hands of people who promoted racism, segregation, and deadly heartache. We cannot forget Till, Evers, King, Parks, Hamer, Dahmer, the three civil rights workers murdered in Neshoba County, northern migration, and a ton more of disturbances and deaths.

For the largest part, we have moved past all that to better days. Yet, some vestiges of those painful times reoccur in our beloved state.

"Heritage" is whatever someone wants it to be. Heritage is not just Southern men wearing gray CSA uniforms fighting over three troublesome convictions: slavery, state sovereignty, and sectionalism. Let's take off the idealistic glasses of heritage and see the past 100-plus years as the deep heartache it was, caused by our misguided forefathers in their every attempt to maintain racial separation by intimidation and degradation.

The flag is not heinous to minorities just because it was flown in the Civil War from 1861-65, but for its misuse over the past century-plus as a primary symbol of the championing of white supremacy and racial inequality. Consider that footballs, pecan pies, magnolia blossoms, fried catfish, hushpuppies, and other things special to us



Guest opinion
with Matt Buckles

were not what were shoved in the faces of our black brethren, but this controversial flag was.

I voted for the new flag design the time a vote was taken in 2001. The entrenched stubbornness of many Mississippians left us with the old flag, furthering a continual racial and culture morass. South Carolina, a sister state no less Southern than Mississippi, made a recent stride in this area but only because of nine deaths in church.

Let's not wait for a tragedy to open our eyes. I hope our state will re-channel its stubbornness into positive areas and move forward with a flag that unites, rather than reminds us of a hundred year-plus ordeal of heartache, racial hatred, and calculated schemes to harm and limit minorities.

I also hope our state will allow love and justice to move us forward to adopt a new flag. It is much more noble to be motivated by love and life than by death. We can take wholesome actions in a state that is rapidly approaching 40% minority population. Mississippi can put her best qualities to work for a much greater good for all our citizens, and Mississippi Baptists can lead the way.

I can suggest a good place for any item used that symbolizes white supremacy during and after Reconstruction: a museum. Halls of history can best teach about the horrors of the past, and we can all glean strong lessons of hope that will drive us to a higher road of love and life. Let's move it. Let's move this symbol of the past from the flagpole to the museum.

I am pro-Mississippi, pro-USA, pro-Israel, pro-life, pro-Bible based marriage — and pro-hopeful when it comes to moving our state forward, not living with a jaded view of heritage, and staying grounded in biblical Judeo-Christian values of love and truth.

Buckles is senior pastor of First Church, Vicksburg, and president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

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HISTORICAL ADDITION — The preaching rail used by famed 19th century British preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon now greets visitors at the front of the newly completed Spurgeon Library on the campus of Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, Mo. (BP photo courtesy of Midwestern Seminary)

Spurgeon preaching rail now part of Midwestern Seminary

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP) — A preaching rail used in London by Charles H. Spurgeon during his 19th century ministry has become the latest addition to the new library at Midwestern Seminary that is dedicated to the British preacher.

MBTS president Jason Allen announced the acquisition of the preaching rail from First Church in Weaver, Ala., on Aug. 10. The rail, which functioned much like a modern-day pulpit, is prominently featured near the front entrance of the library in Kansas City, Mo.

"The Spurgeon preaching rail makes a signature addition to Midwestern Seminary's Spurgeon Library," Allen said. "It complements over 6,000 books and artifacts of the great Victorian preacher... Many consider Spurgeon to be the greatest preacher of the English language; therefore, we consider this rail to be a tremendous addition to our collection."

"I am thankful to First Baptist Church Weaver and Pastor Ron Sweatt for entrusting it to us," Allen said. "We believe the Spurgeon preaching rail to be a precious stewardship for Midwestern Seminary and the church as a whole."

According to Allen and Sweatt, the preaching rail has a unique history. W.A. Criswell, then pastor of First

Church, Dallas, amassed a large collection of antiques and artifacts during his overseas trips. It was on one of those trips, in the middle of the 20th century, that he acquired the preaching rail.

In 1976, Criswell gave the preaching rail to First Church, Weaver, which was pastored by his friend Bill Wilson at that time.

In a letter dated June 30, 1997, Criswell told then-pastor Roger Willmore, "The Spurgeon rail pulpit was there in Spurgeon's College (in London) before I brought it home. It was used by us in our own Wednesday evening services for several years before it was given to your church."

Sweatt noted that upon receipt of the rail, considerable reconditioning of the piece was needed and church member Richard Johnson "did a lot of work to bring it back to its original condition."

Sweatt said First Church, Weaver, has used the rail in various capacities over the years.

With the recent completion of the Spurgeon Library construction project, Allen said the time was ideal to bring the rail to Midwestern Seminary. "First Baptist Church Weaver possessed the rail for almost 40 years, but has now chosen to entrust it to us so it could receive broader visibility."

Sweatt said he and the members of First Church, Weaver, "are honored to have the rail displayed in the Spurgeon Library for so many to see and appreciate."

He said, "It reminds me of the importance and critical nature of the proclamation of God's Word. There is no other lasting foundation upon which our lives, churches, and ministries can be built other than the Word of God."

"My prayer is that God would use it to remind those of us who have been preaching for years to stick with the Word, and to encourage those beginning their preaching ministry to rest and trust in the Word."

"To me, the rail also emphasizes that a difference can be made by a person who will surrender to God's call and will for his or her life."

Christian George, curator of the Charles Spurgeon Library, said, "Charles Spurgeon was best of all, and most of all, a preacher of the Gospel. As soon as you enter the Spurgeon Library, you will see his preaching rail. It's front and center because preaching played a central role in his, and in our, mission."

Midwestern Seminary will publicly dedicate the Charles Spurgeon Library on Oct. 20.

Christian movie opens number one on first night

NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) — The latest movie from the Kendrick brothers, who are known for previous Christian-based movies such as *Facing the Giants*, *Fireproof*, and *Courageous*, opened August 28 in first place in box office sales on a single night.

War Room also finished second overall to *Straight Outta Compton* when factoring in the entire opening weekend ending Aug. 30, Box Office Mojo reported.

War Room, rated PG, promotes the power of a disciplined prayer life and grossed over four million dollars on Aug. 28, averaging \$3,564 on each of 1,135 screens. *Straight Outta Compton*, an R-rated movie about the American hip-hop gangsta rap group N.W.A., took in \$3.85 million that same night, averaging \$1,225 on 3,142 screens.

While *Straight Outta Compton* took first place for full weekend sales with \$13.2 million and maintained the top spot in which it debuted three weekends ago, *War Room* did better than industry insiders predicted by grossing \$11 million.

War Room's per-screen average for the weekend was described as "robust" at \$9,692.

"Sony's faith-based film from their Affirm division flew so far under the radar that it didn't even get a CinemaScore," Box Office Mojo reported, "but it nearly stole *Compton's* title and, at the same time, became the biggest hit for the Kendrick brothers, director Alex Kendrick, and his writer/producer brother, Stephen. Their modestly-budgeted flicks have a great return on investment."

The movie is the Kendrick brothers' first project independent of Sherwood Pictures, the filmmaking ministry of Sherwood Church in Albany, Ga., where both brothers are associate pastors. It is also their first offering since the successful *Courageous*, which grossed \$34.5 million at the box of-

fice four years ago and sold five million DVDs.

War Room stars noted Bible teachers Priscilla Shirer in a lead role and Beth Moore in the supporting cast. Shirer is cast as a young wife and mother who heeds the advice of an older, wiser woman to establish a room in her home for prayer — a war room — and to pray earnestly for her husband, marriage, child, and home.

While Southern Baptists and other faith leaders promoted *War Room* as a must-see, TV Guide said the film's success was contrary to the forecast of secular critics.

"Despite receiving nearly universal bad reviews from critics," TV Guide reported, "the faith-based film *War Room* emerged as a formidable force at the box office this weekend and almost knocked *Straight Outta Compton* out of first place."

The Southern Baptist North American Mission Board has linked its Evangelism Resource Center (ERC) prayer line to the *War Room* website, offering prayer at (888) 537-8720 toll-free, and through the FindItHere.com online chat.

The ERC offers personalized prayer 24 hours a day, 365 days a year all over the U.S., giving callers the life-changing hope found only in Jesus and pointing them to local churches for discipleship, according to the website.

The film is accompanied by several resources from B&H Publishing Group and LifeWay, including a book by the Kendrick brothers titled, *The Battle Plan for Prayer*, and a book titled, *Fervent*, by Shirer, who is a New York Times best-selling author.

Resources include two children's books written by the Kendricks, *Prayer Works: Prayer Training and Strategy for Kids*, and *Peter's Perfect Prayer Place*. A *War Room* Bible Study and Church Campaign Kit include a five-week small group study, sermon outlines, and promotional items.

"Despite receiving nearly universal bad reviews from critics, the faith-based film *War Room* emerged as a formidable force at the box office this weekend..."

TV Guide

I don't know about you, but at times it's hard to keep life all together. It's not just a matter of getting older. It's a matter of life piling up. Truthfully, life is always hectic and always on the edge of getting jumbled. When you get a little older, it's hard to keep everything sorted out and in place.

Not long ago I was eating supper with an old friend of mine who is several years older than I am. As we left the restaurant he saw an old, old friend of his. They were glad to see each other. My friend walked over and said, "Man, how are you doing?" His friend responded, "I'm doing great. How's your knee doing?" The old fellow looked at him and said, "It's not my knee but my shoulder that was hurting." His friend said, "Oh, well, how's it doing, then?" I took the opportunity to tell him that he needed to keep everything in order and keep life straightened out.

Seriously, every age and stage in life is that way. There are young kids in school trying to learn to have everything ready when a report or a project is due. If they go off to college it gets even more intense as the stakes are raised and the deadlines are more dreaded. Then they are out of school and possibly into marriage and one or two or three kids come along. It is not easy to keep it all together. When the kids are grown and off on their adventures, the problems of keeping life all together are still with us.

So what do you do when life gets all unraveled and you can't keep it all together? Well, at whatever point in life you may be, just kind of relax and smile



Keeping It All Together

and enjoy the moment, like the two old guys who didn't know if it was his knee or his shoulder with which he had physical problem. They just laughed and went on. I recognize that sometimes it gets more serious than just not remembering which body part isn't working.

A friend of mine was telling about his mother who is living in an assisted living area and she was telling her son about one of the conversations that took place at the table when they were eating lunch. The lady across the table looked at a lady who was sitting beside her and said, "Bonnie, I can't remember. Was it you or your sister who died?" The lady to whom she was speaking, sharp as a tack, didn't want to miss the humor of the moment so she said, "It was me." The other lady replied, "Well, I couldn't remember

which one of y'all it was." Sometimes life is just a little bit on the humorous side, even when it comes to departing here. It would be helpful, though, if all along life's journey most of us would lighten up even about the heavy things of life.

The second thing that would be helpful is just to relax and remember that most of life's disconnections and uncertainties are not end-of-the-world experiences. Have you seen folks that everything, regardless whether it's at church or work or home, turns into a dramatic, "There's no more hope," kind of moment? Do not allow some little mishap or misunderstanding or misconception to ruin the big joys that may be just ahead of you.

Finally, the ultimate help to smooth out the roads of life even when they twist

and turn is to do what Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Trust God. Trust God when you get off course. Trust Him when you are not sure of the direction you are going. Trust Him when it appears to everyone else that you're going the wrong way. Trust Him to lead you and — equally important — trust Him when you get off course, knowing that He can get you back on course.

It was a rainy night and I was trying to get on to a speaking engagement. I was trying to see through all the rain and darkness to try to locate the place where I was going to speak. I could not find the place I was supposed to be. Up and down the road I had gone, when I finally saw a man walking in the rain down the side of the road. No one else was available, so I pulled up beside him and said, "Excuse me. Could you tell me where I can find this place?" In the pouring down rain he looked through my window and said, "Mister, you're on the right road, but you're going the wrong way." He told me exactly where my destination was and I turned around and found it with no problem. We all come to moments like that in life when we may feel like we're on the right road, but we're going the wrong way and there are others who help us, but we ultimately know that God will help us and get us where we need to be.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Vacation Bible School



FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, MATHISTON: June 14 - 18; shown are students with members of the fire department.



HICKORY CHURCH, HICKORY, held its Terrific Tuesdays program Aug. 2 with a presentation of Knight's Camp at Rock Kingdom. Terrific Tuesdays extends VBS all summer long.

In other VBS News:

► **Neely Church,** Neely: June 8 - 13, with an average of 48 students and 30 workers. The children gave an offering of \$404 for family ministry. Katrina Garner and Olivia Rice, co-directors; Charles Garner, pastor.

► **Valley Park Church, Valley Park:** June 15 - 19; family night, June 21; 68 enrolled; average attendance, 51; offering taken for Long House project, \$320. Judy Newman, director.

BIBL i O C I P H E R

IHEGAJ, B LCFKJ FC CEH JGGW, FKJ
UKGZU: BD FKN PFK EHFV PN QGBZH,
FKJ GRHK CEH JGGW, B MBAA ZGPH BK
CG EBP, FKJ MBAA LOR MBCE EBP, FKJ
EH MBCE PH.
WHQHAFBCBGK CEWHH: CMHKCN

Clue: A = L

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Hebrews 1:10

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ABU BAKR AL-BAGHDADI

Islamic terrorists reviving practice of rape as worship

NASHVILLE (BP) — The revelation that the ISIS caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi repeatedly raped American hostage Kayla Mueller before her murder has brought to light terrorists' revival of the ancient practice of raping women captives as a form of religious worship, experts say.

Ayman S. Ibrahim, senior fellow for the Jenkins Center for the Christian Understanding of Islam at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said the gruesome practice dates to a biographical text about Muslim prophet Muhammad, who is recorded to have taken a captive as his wife after killing her husband during a seventh century conflict with the Jewish tribe of Bani Qurayza.

The practice was supposedly continued after Muhammad's death by Muslim leader Khalid ibn al-Walid, who beheaded a notable man named Malik and fornicated with his widow, Ibrahim said.

"The evil deeds of ISIS and its commanders will continue, supported by what they claim to be sacred — ancient holy texts. The voice of these texts is louder than contemporary reasoning," Ibrahim blogged on the First Things journal of religion and public life.

"If the Muslim community itself does not counter the claims offered by militant Muslim groups, there can be no hope in overcoming the use of violence under the banner of religion."

The rape of Mueller, a 26-year-old humanitarian aid worker whom ISIS captured in August 2013 in Turkey along with her Syrian boyfriend, was revealed months after her February murder. U.S. intelligence officials confirmed in June Mueller's sexual enslavement by al-Baghdadi, her parents told the Associated Press.

"They told us that he married her, and we all understand what that means," the Associ-

ated Press quoted her father Carl Mueller. "Kayla did not marry this man," her mother Marsha Mueller added. "He took her to his room and he abused her and she came back crying."

Mueller was among perhaps thousands of women and girls captured and systematically tortured and repeatedly raped by

ISIS, according to numbers released in March by Human Rights Watch (HRW).

HRW based its report in part on the interviews with 11 women and nine girls who managed to escape ISIS in northern Iraq between September 2014 and January 2015, as well as medical

vice providers, community leaders, and activists serving victims.

"The women and girls who spoke to Human Rights Watch described repeated rape, sexual violence, and other abuse in ISIS captivity," HRW reported.

"Jahila (all survivors' names have been changed for their security), age 12, said that Arab men whom she recognized from her village north of Sinjar accosted her and seven family members on August 3, 2014, as they were trying to flee ISIS. ... Jahila said that during her captivity, seven ISIS fighters 'owned' her, and four raped her on multiple occasions. Sometimes I was sold. Sometimes I was given as a gift."

Joe Carter, a communications specialist with the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, wrote that ISIS "considers rape of sex slaves to be a form of worship," referencing a New York Times article in which a 15-year-old Yazidi girl describes the actions of a 20-year-old ISIS soldier who raped her.

"Every time that he came to rape me, he would pray," said the girl identified only as F, the first letter of her name. "He kept telling me this is ibadah (an Islamic term meaning worship)."



MUELLER



IBRAHIM

Children grasp need to help other people around the world

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (BP) — Through giving their pennies, nickels, dimes, and more, kids at Circle Drive Church are seeking to help others through Baptist Global Response (BGR), which provides global aid on behalf of Southern Baptists.

"Children can make a difference right now by giving and by praying," said Kathy Routt, the church's ministry director, "but they're also future givers and... those who are going to care for people around the world."

For the past several years, the children's ministry at the church has encouraged kids to raise money to help Haitian earthquake survivors recover from disaster, to buy pigs for Southeast Asian pastors who need income sources, and more.

This past spring, they raised money for BGR's work with Middle Eastern refugees. The humanitarian aid organization currently facilitates hundreds of projects on behalf of Southern Baptists in more than 50 countries by providing the basics of life such as food, water, and shelter.

To assist BGR in helping feed and shelter the displaced, children set up a booth at the church and gave away homemade coasters and baked goods in exchange for donations. At the end of the fundraiser, about \$1,200 had been collected.

"[The children] were so excited," Routt said. "They were amazed. To kids... that's a huge amount of money."

Before embarking on the project, Routt made sure her students understood the needs they were addressing. She says she told them about the millions of refu-



SPIRIT OF GIVING — Students from Circle Drive Church in Colorado Springs, Co., display potholders they gave away in exchange for donations to Baptist Global Response. (BP photo)

gees who have fled multiple conflicts in places like Syria, and then she made the story personal.

She asked the children about what they would do if someone knocked on their door and told them they had 10 minutes to flee their house before enemy forces invaded. What would they bring with them? How would they transport their possessions? What would they eat when they reached a safe place?

Then, without Routt leading them, the children prayed. They prayed the refugees would find safety, food, shelter, and hope through Christ.

"Hearing them pray for the people really helps you know that they got it," Routt said.

The kids at Circle Drive Church are not alone. Children all over the country are now mounting fundraisers and making donations, said BGR Ex-

ecutive Director Jeff Palmer. He noted donations from Vacation Bible School (VBS) offerings have increased dramatically over the past two years.

For instance, Piner Church in Morning View, Ky., submitted a VBS offering of more than \$2,000 to help Nepal earthquake survivors rebuild their lives. The VBS at Urbancrest Church in Lebanon, Oh., also gave more than \$1,200 toward whatever project needed funds the most.

Urbancrest Church senior pastor Tom Pendergrass wrote in an e-mail that a third-grader there donated nearly \$100. He told his parents other children needed the money more than he did.

"It's challenging to my faith," Palmer said. "If a 10-year-old or a five-year-old can do that, why can't I do more?"

Moore seeks USCIRF reauthorization

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — Russell Moore, president of Southern Baptists' Ethic and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville, is joining religious liberty advocates to

urge members of Congress to reauthorize the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an important federal panel on global religious freedom, as the deadline nears for doing so.

Moore and 85 others signed onto a letter calling for reauthorization of the USCIRF by Sept. 30. The current authority for the panel expires on that date.

USCIRF — a nine-member, bipartisan panel — researches conditions for religious freedom overseas and makes policy recommendations to Congress, the White House and State Department.

Moore's predecessor at ERLC, Richard Land, served as a USCIRF commissioner for several years. Land is currently president of Trinity Evangelical Seminary in Indiana.



MOORE

In their Aug. 24 letter, Moore and his allies with the International Religious Freedom (IRF) Roundtable said USCIRF "has been vital to elevating the

promotion of religious freedom in U.S. foreign policy." The commission "can be counted upon to give an unvarnished view of the state of religious freedom in any given country regardless of the complexities of the bilateral relationship between our respective governments," according to the letter.

Moore told Baptist Press (BP). "Religious liberty isn't an Ameri-



LAND

can privilege. It's a fundamental human right shared by every single being that has a conscience."

USCIRF "plays a crucial role in standing up for soul freedom against tyranny around the world," he said. "My prayer is that Congress would recognize this and stand on the side of liberty by passing this bill."

Robert George, USCIRF's chairman and the McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton University in New Jersey, told Baptist Press the "dire circumstances of religious freedom across the globe" make the commission's work "more important — and urgent — than ever."

"It is critical that the commission be reauthorized, and reauthorized on terms that do not weaken its ability to fulfill its mission," George said in comments e-mailed to BP.

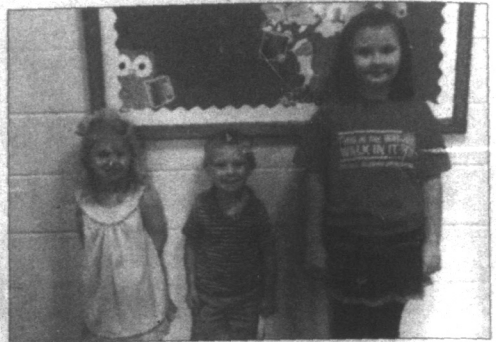
Just for the Record



FIRST CHURCH, SUMRALL, recognized Glenn Davis for 50 years of ministry. Shown are Carol Davis, Davis, and pastor Philip Cooper.



VALLEY GROVE CHURCH, PONTOTOC COUNTY, recognizes Bible drillers Walker Tackett, Hannah Stewart, and Holly Stewart. Melanie Owen, leader.



Top readers of **GILLSBURG CHURCH, GILLSBURG**, reading program are Niley Wentworth, Rowdy Williams, and Taylor Lilly.



FREDONIA CHURCH, NEW ALBANY, recognized its Mission Friends, GAs, and RAs Aug. 27.



FIRST CHURCH, TREMONT, hosted a Hooked on Christ event with Clay Dyer, with over 400 people participating.



HIGHLAND CHURCH, MERIDIAN, ordained Ken Richardson and Jason Clayton as deacons. Shown are Kelly Richardson, Richardson, pastor Carl White, Clayton, and Danielle Clayton.



Glenda Wornack, **CENTRAL CHURCH, MCCOMB**, received a Certificate in Biblical Teaching through New Orleans Seminary at the Pike County Association. Shown are David Millican, Wornack, and Steve Clark.



The women's ministry of **FRIENDSHIP CHURCH, ABERDEEN**, is in the process of updating the church's library. Shown, from the August meeting, are Betty Spencer, Marie Miller, Gwen Dauphin, and Charlotte Byrd.



On the tenth anniversary of the fellowship building of **HOLMESVILLE CHURCH, MCCOMB**, being destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, the church, which had dwindled to two families, is now having Wednesday night Bible studies, children's church and a choir on Sunday mornings, and an average of 65 in attendance. The church dedicated its new fellowship hall recently with 150 attending. Lee Mathis, pastor.



The Women on Mission and RAs of **GRANDVIEW CHURCH, PEARL**, teamed to provide encouragement bags for local hospital cancer patients. The RAs decorated 50 bags. Donations were used to purchase water, snacks, notepads, pencils, and Bibles.

Just for the Record



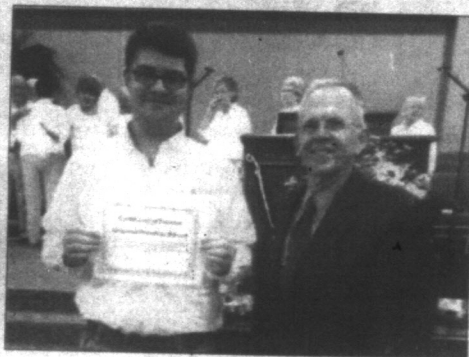
FAIR RIVER CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, recently held a baby/parent dedication. Shown are the Waycasters with Sam Nations, the Hodges with William Thatcher, and pastor Jay Anderson.



NORTH COLUMBIA CHURCH, COLUMBIA, ordained three men as deacons Aug. 9. Shown are Duane and Charlotte Hibley, Brant and Jennifer Terrell, and Cheryl and Gilbert Jacobs.



EDON CHURCH, STRINGER, ordained Gus Bynum as deacon. Shown are Bynum and pastor John Davis.



OAK HILL CHURCH, MERIDIAN, recently licensed Ben Barnett to the gospel ministry. Shown are Barnett and pastor Mike Russell.



UNITY CHURCH, GEORGETOWN, honored Talmadge Smith with a celebration of 50 years in ministry. He is interim pastor of the church.



BRANCH CHURCH, MORTON, honored Gordon Sansing and his wife Alese for his guidance as interim pastor during the last two years.

In other Church News:

➤ **Carrollton Church, Carrollton**, is hosting a women's conference Sept. 12, 8:30 a.m. - 2 p.m., featuring Rita Sweatt, Chuck Reynolds, and Tony Martin. \$15 fee includes breakfast, snacks, and light lunch.

➤ **Salem Church, Toomsaba**, will unveil a Mississippi Historical Marker Sept. 13, 11 a.m., to commemorate 177 years of service. The church has been in continuous service on the same site since 1838. Lamar Lifer, pastor.

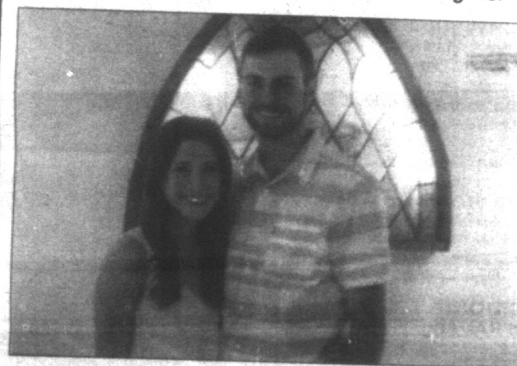
➤ **High Hill Church, Neshoba County**, is hosting a Sunday night singing Sept. 6, 6 p.m., featuring Uncle Pug's Blue Grass Band. Don Cook, pastor; Mike Barker, music leader.

➤ **Skene Church, Boyle**, ordained Jim Norris as deacon Aug. 23.

Staff Changes



MONT ROSE CHURCH, QUITMAN, has called Matthew Johnson as pastor. He is a graduate of William Carey University and Golden Gate Seminary. He is married to Rebekah Johnson and they have two sons, Liam and Cash. He is shown with Jim Ray, who preached the charge during Johnson's ordination service Aug. 16.



CENTRAL CHURCH, MCCOMB, has called Greg Marble as music minister. He is a graduate of Mississippi State University and is enrolled at New Orleans Seminary. He comes with his wife, Sara.

College News



Ceremonies to install Wendy B. Scott as the new dean of the **MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE SCHOOL OF LAW** are set for September 10. The event begins 5:30 p.m. at First Church Jackson. On August 11, 2014, Scott became the eighth dean of the MC School of Law and the institution's first African-American leader. A graduate of Harvard University and the New York University School of Law, she succeeded Jim Rosenblatt, who served with distinction for 11 years.

Jackson music minister helps pen book on worship

NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) — Breaking the paradigm of age-segregated services, navigating a "post-worship war culture" and fostering multicultural praise gatherings are among the topics addressed in a book by L. Lavon Gray and Frank S. Page on worship challenges for 21st-century churches.

Gray is minister of music at First Church, Jackson. Page is president of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee in Nashville and a former interim pastor of First Church, Jackson. The pair also previously served together on the staff of First Church in Taylors, S.C.

Gray writes of "the enormous challenges for churches in the area of worship."

"Decades of 'worship wars' have left many congregations shell-shocked and uncertain of their core identities. Church music and worship education continues to lag years behind actual church practice, leaving many worship pastors with minimal theological training."

These with other factors including church consumerism, performance-driven worship, and the changing demographic landscape of our communities raise important issues for church leaders that must be addressed."

Worship "has become a big claim in the twenty-first century church, but based on the reality of people's lives, the worship that we claim to be experiencing is not truly affecting the quality of our lives, our families, and our witness," Page writes in the introduction of *Hungry for Worship: Challenges and Solutions for Today's Church*.

The book, published by the Woman's Missionary Union's New Hope imprint, is intended as "a challenge to all of us," Page writes. "It is a challenge to our churches, to our entities, and to our educational institutions. It is a challenge to every believer to look seriously at how he or she worships."

The book's recommendations to church leaders include:

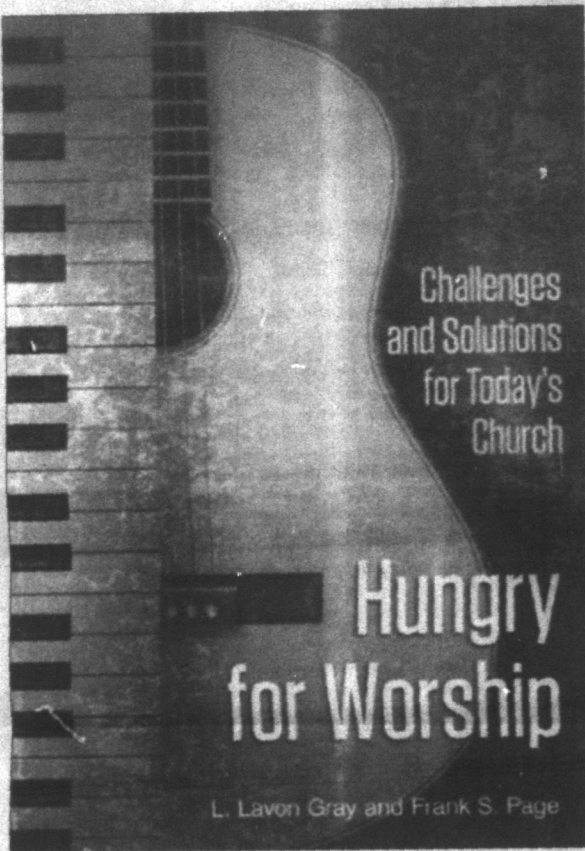
- Replace "age-segregated worship" with a "multigenerational worship approach." For decades, some churches have separated youth, college students, and adults into separate worship services, Page and Gray write. Based



GRAY



PAGE



on Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and other Scripture passages, they recommend involving multiple generations of believers in the same worship service as a means of passing down the Christian faith.

Utilizing "creatively presented hymns" and avoiding labels like "contemporary," "traditional" and "blended" can help congregations begin "worshipping together, learning from and teaching one another," Page and Gray write.

- Don't be satisfied with the present "truce" in worship wars between proponents of traditional and contemporary music; work to achieve God-focused unity.

Weariness from fighting, a natural affinity between the boomer and millennial generations, and a proliferation of contemporary songs that reflect solid theology all have contributed to a lull in worship wars, Page and Gray write.

- Worship leaders must "rise to the occasion and lead people in authentic worship of the King of kings and Lord of lords... something that never should have divided us in the first place."

- Build a multicultural worship experience by diversifying leadership, planting new churches, and breaking down walls of racial prejudice.

While noting numerous challenges associated with diversifying local congregations, Page and Gray write, "There should be no confusion concerning God's mandate to reach our communities with the message of Christ: the requirement is clear. When churches acknowledge the changing identities of their communities, reaching across cultural barriers becomes a question of obedience."

Other topics addressed in the book include using technology effectively, educating worship pastors based on the needs of modern churches, affirming the lifelong calling of worship pastors, and ensuring that songs used in worship have robust theological content.

Mississippian Mike Harland, director of LifeWay Worship in Nashville and former minister of music at Broadmoor Church, Madison, labels *Hungry for Worship* "not just another worship book."

"It is an important answer to the questions about worship on the hearts and minds of the modern church," Harland writes in a foreword, "and it's not just a book with another set of opinions on the subject. It is a serious attempt to gain a biblical perspective on these issues from two students of the Word and servants of the church."

Revivals & Homecomings



EAST MOSS POINT CHURCH, MOSS POINT, recently celebrated its 125th anniversary. Peggy Saliba of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Historical Commission presented pastor David Abbot with a certificate noting the church's longevity and service. Guest pastor, Charles Mitchell; guest speaker, Philip Price.

CORRECTION

► In the August 27, 2015 edition of *The Baptist Record*, the speaker for homecoming at **Pilgrim's Rest Church, Batesville, Sept. 6** was misidentified as Daniel Boyd. The speaker is Daniel Minor. The Record regrets the error.

MS POSITIONS

THE TRI-COUNTY BAPTIST MISSION (LAWRENCE, MARION, AND WALTHAM BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS) IS RECEIVING RESUMES FOR THE POSITION OF ASSOCIATE ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONS DIRECTOR through October 31, 2015. Resumes can be mailed to PO Box 350, Columbia MS 39429 (attention Executive Committee), or emailed to tricitybaptistmissions@gmail.com.

BETHESDA BAPTIST CHURCH IN TERRY IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR A BI-VOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER. Please mail resumes to Bethesda Baptist Church, 13628 Midway Rd. Terry, MS 39170.

BUCATUNNA BAPTIST CHURCH IN CLARKE COUNTY IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR BI-VOCATIONAL OR FULL-TIME PASTOR. Please send resumes to: 10806 CR514, Meridian, MS 39301

EASTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH IN INDIANOLA, MS, IS IN SEARCH OF A FULL-TIME PASTOR. Please send resumes to Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 468, Indianola, MS 38751 or e-mail to Shirley.Betts@bellsouth.net.

BIG LEVEL BAPTIST CHURCH IN WIGGINS HAS AN IMMEDIATE OPENING FOR A PART-TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR. Resumes can be mailed to 1346 City Bridge Rd, Wiggins, MS 39577 ATTN: Youth Director Search Committee or emailed to biglevelbaptist@att.net.

FULL-TIME PASTOR FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH, STURGIS, MS. Send applications or nominations to PastorSearch@friendshipsturgis.com or to Friendship BC, 5491 Craig Springs Rd, Sturgis, MS 39769. See friendshipsturgis.com for more information.

GUNTER ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH IN FLORENCE, MS IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR. Please submit resumes to Gunter Road Search Committee c/o Craig Dukes 2209 Woodland Place Florence, MS 39073 or rodukes@bellsouth.net.

BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH, A SMALL COUNTRY CHURCH BETWEEN DREW AND RULEVILLE, MISS, IN SUNFLOWER COUNTY, IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR THE POSITION OF BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR. Please send resumes to P.O. Box 249, Drew, Miss. 38737.

CLASSIFIEDS

COVENANT BAPTIST CHURCH, COLLIERVILLE, TN SEEKS A FULL-TIME MINISTER OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES to provide leadership in developing and directing ministry to preschoolers and children from birth through twelve years old and their families. Send resumes no later than 10/31/15 to Personnel Committee, Covenant Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1165, Collierville, TN 38027-1165, or to drsam@mycbbc.org.

COVENANT BAPTIST CHURCH, COLLIERVILLE, TN SEEKS A FULL-TIME MINISTER OF STUDENTS, SINGLES, AND THEIR FAMILIES to provide leadership in developing and directing ministry to youth grades 7-12, college students, singles, and their families. Send resumes no later than 10/31/15 to Personnel Committee, Covenant Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1165, Collierville, TN 38027-1165, or to drsam@mycbbc.org.

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OBITUARY

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — John Frank Gibson Jr., professor of communications for Leavell College at New Orleans Seminary, died at his home on August 24. He was 56 years old. The cause of death is still undetermined. A memorial service for Gibson, known for his acts of kindness within the seminary community, was held Aug. 28 in Leavell Chapel on the seminary campus in a joint service with First Church, New Orleans, where Gibson's wife Christi has served as minister of discipleship and missions.

Gibson was elected to the faculty of Leavell College (called the College of Undergraduate Studies at the time) in 1998. Before joining the faculty, Gibson led the seminary's student enlistment department and served as director of alumni relations and church minister relations. Gibson worked in his spare time providing free car repair for seminary students, often purchasing parts out of his own pocket.



GIBSON

Born in Louisiana to a long line of Baptist ministers, Gibson spent many of his formative years in Mississippi where his father served in pastoral ministry. He earned master of divinity and doctor of theology degrees at NOBTS and an undergraduate degree from Mississippi College in Clinton. He served as youth minister and senior pastor at numerous churches in Louisiana and Mississippi. At the time of his death, he was pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Pearlman.

In addition to his wife Christi, he is survived by two adult children: Callie, a doctoral student at the University of Alabama, and Trey, an undergraduate student at Louisiana State University. In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial gifts be made to the John Gibson Servant Leadership Fund established at New Orleans Seminary, c/o Institutional Advancement, 3939 Gentilly Blvd., New Orleans, LA 70126, or online at nobts.edu.

IMB

cont. from p. 1

sionary appointments as well as employing alternative funding models are not "feasible" courses of action, he said.

Platt noted that personnel expenses account for about 80% of the IMB's budget.

Platt also mentioned the possibility of some employees transitioning to work with the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board (NAMB) in Alpharetta, Ga., but he said leaders of the two mission entities have not discussed it.

"It is encouraging to us as leadership as we think through the difficulties with a step like this, but also the opportunities that are going to open up [for] work among unreached peoples in North America and work in churches in North America," Platt said.

"I trust in all kinds of ways that God will creatively and sovereignly lead and direct 600-800 people in the days to come, and because of our ongoing and growing partnership with NAMB, I'm certain there are possibilities that may unfold along those lines, [but] we don't have a formal plan for integrating certain people into certain positions with NAMB," Platt said.

Though IMB expenditures have exceeded revenue by \$210 million over the past six years, according to reports from IMB leadership, the anticipated spending adjustment "is not in any way a reflection of a lack of accountability or responsibility" among past IMB leaders, Platt said. "Previous leadership put in place a plan to draw down the number of missionaries on the field over time in a way that we have now realized is not getting us to where we need to be as quickly as maybe once thought."

Traeger said budget shortfalls have been the result of rev-



HEADED TO HARVEST — Family, friends, and attendees pray over a newly appointed Southern Baptist missionary couple during the appointment service Aug. 25 at Spotswood Church in Fredericksburg, Va. The couple was among 42 missionaries appointed at the service. (BP photo)

enue projections that exceeded actual income, including projections related to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions (LMCO).

Data reported in Baptist Press and Southern Baptist Convention Annuals indicate IMB budgets projected LMCO revenue equivalent to the goal — even when the previous year's Lottie Moon revenue was millions less. One hundred percent of the offering each year goes to support Southern Baptist missionaries in the field.

For example, the projected 2015 LMCO income is \$180 million, despite a 2014 offering of \$153 million. The projected 2014 LMCO revenue was \$175 million, despite a 2013 offering of \$154 million.

Since 2007, projected LMCO revenue in IMB budgets has exceeded LMCO receipts by more than \$170 million.

Traeger said Lottie Moon receipts have increased by an average of .6% annually over the past four years.

Until now, the shortfall has been overcome by using reserve

funds and selling property but that plan is no longer feasible, Platt said.

The IMB's unrestricted net assets, which include contingency reserve funds, went from more than \$256 million in 2007 to \$98 million in 2014, with a low of \$56 million in 2011, according to audited IMB financial statements as reported in SBC Annuals.

According to Baptist Press, Platt told IMB trustees during a February meeting in Houston, Texas, "We want to empower limitless missionary teams to make disciples and multiply churches among unreached people. We need a strategy that doesn't cap our number of missionaries merely based upon how much money we have."

"Right now our funnel is really small... such that we're turning people away and what I'm saying, what we know, is that we need to blow open this funnel and create as many pathways as possible for Christians and churches to get the Gospel to unreached people."

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



Dr. Rory Lee, Executive Director

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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

JULY 2015

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AUGUST 1-15, 2015

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AUGUST 1-15, 2015

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Don Brady
Mrs. Glenda C. Fry
John Barry "Rod" Brasfield
Scooter & Teresa Henderson
Taylor & Jenni Henderson
Spence & Blair Pepper
Mr. & Mrs. Charles G. Bevil
Mr. Charles W. Holmes
Johnie L. Brittain

Mr. & Mrs. Thomas E. Warnock
Mr. Glenn Brock
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Alexander
James A. (Jim) Brown
Helen Brown and Bo & Linda
Surber
Ann Brock Brunson
Mr. & Mrs. Rudy Grenn
Mrs. Jean Carson
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Alexander
Corey Carwyle

Mr. & Mrs. Barney J. Albritton
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Sisco
Brenda Case
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Sisco
Hope Case
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Sisco
Nett Chesney
Pine Grove Baptist Church
R. E. (Robert) Coker
Mr. & Mrs. Clifton Porter
Thelma Louise Copeland
Ms. Bezy Johnson
Maxine Breedlove Cox

Mark Scobey
Jane Crum
Wade, Lisa & Elsie Allen
Mr. Bill Crutcher
Larry & Margie Case
Edward Cutts
Mr. & Mrs. Bennie Nutt
Dorris Ellis
Mrs. Ernestine M. Lindsley
Patricia Fisher
Tommy and Sheila Bryson
Mrs. Elsie Fortenberry
Mr. & Mrs. Lester Haddox

SOCIAL SERVICES SECRETARY

The BCV has an immediate opening for an individual to fill the position of Social Services Secretary in the agency's headquarters in Ridgeland. The individual filling this position must be a mature Christian adult with personal integrity, Christian character and a sound reputation. This individual must also have a demonstrated commitment to the ethical standards incumbent upon each staff member of the BCV staff and an appreciation of the confidentiality extended to children and families served by the BCV. This individual must be able to deal with children and adults in a warm, accepting manner. The successful candidate must have a minimum of an associate's degree or equivalent, and training and experience in secretarial tasks and be proficient in general office computing tasks, specifically word processing, spreadsheet applications and data entry in various applications. Other significant responsibilities include phone coverage, extensive filing and significant interactions with members of the social service and clinical staff.

To apply for this position, please contact Kristen Slaven, Director of Social Services at kslaven@baptistchildrensvillage.com. Applications are available at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com. Please complete and send it, along with a statement of faith and a resume copy to Ms. Slaven at 114 Marketridge Drive, Ridgeland, MS 39157.

BCV EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The BCV employs Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife teams, without dependent children or pets, to serve in the position of Houseparents. The couples must be mature Christian adults with personal integrity, character and of good reputation with standards and ethics expected of any member of The Baptist Children's Village staff.

They receive a salary with benefits and are provided a private bedroom and meals while on duty. The primary job responsibility of Houseparents is to maintain a home-like environment that models healthy, Christian family living for children and youth residents. They are the primary caregivers and help with everything from transportation and homework to laundry and meals when on duty.

Houseparent responsibilities are varied and somewhat dependent upon which campus and to which cottage the couple is assigned. However, all Houseparents need to be in good physical, mental and emotional health. They must be cooperative and comfortable working in a team environment.

To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or 601-922-2242.

A complete job description and application may be downloaded at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com.

God Creates • Genesis 1:1-5, 26-31; 2:1-3

"God stepped out of nowhere, stood on nothing, and created everything." That was the title of a sermon my friend Michael Claunch preached years ago at First Baptist Church of Slidell where he served as pastor. That title is the essence of Genesis 1:1 in a sentence.

Genesis 1:1 reads, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," (KJV). The creation account gives little details of how God created everything from nothing. Not that it would matter if He chose to reveal to us how He did it. The most brilliant minds on earth could never understand the act of creating something from nothing. Deuteronomy 29:29 teaches, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law," (KJV). God revealed all that we need to know.

Genesis 1:1 states that there was a beginning of time. It also states that The Lord made everything. The Hebrew word here translated "create" is *BARA*. It is only used in the bible with God doing the creating, simply because the word means to create from nothing. Only God can do that. You may say that you created a song or a painting, but you used music or colors that God

invented, and sang it with vocal chords. He invented or painted with hands He designed. You simply rearranged words, rhythm, and notes, or water colors and canvas to another form, but you used existing media. Only God can create. We just shape or fashion what He has already created.

Even God created matter and energy from nothing once and was done. After creation, however, the Hebrew words *YAT-SAR* and *ASA* used, even when God makes something. Both best translated "form," or "make" as when God formed Eve from Adam's rib in Genesis 2. God created once. After that the words "form" and "make" are used throughout the Old Testament, with one amazing exception.

David prayed in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me," (KJV). Oddly, the word for create here is *BARA*, which is exclu-

sively used for when God makes something from nothing. So God concluded His creating the cosmos, matter and energy, and physical things, but He continues His awesome work of creation in our hearts.

Psalms 100:3 reads, "Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture," (KJV). When each of us recognizes His rightful role as ruler in our lives, the rest of our world begins to fall into place. This does not happen because we change our minds or our directions. It happens because God changes our hearts.

2 Corinthians 5:17 reads, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," (KJV). When we receive God's Son into our hearts, God does not rearrange the old. He starts over. As this verse says, we are a new creation. God's

miraculous work in us is not accomplished by our will or determination, but is done solely by God through our surrender. We don't have to shape up, or straighten up. We only have to give up. God does the rest, creating a new being where there was only spiritual death. That is why Jesus called it being born again.

So as we celebrate God's wonderful creation, as we stare into the stars at night and marvel at the vastness of God's majesty, remember that God's plan for our salvation preceded the universe. Ephesians 1:4 reveals, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love," (KJV). Before God created things from nothing, He purposed in His heart to create from nothing new life in believers. He designed us new creatures in Christ to be the light of the world before there was light, or our world. God desired that we be the salt of the earth, before there was an earth or salt. He still creates from nothing every time a sinner repents and comes home. What an awesome, wonderful Creator we serve.

Henson is pastor of Oakdale Church, Brandon.



Explore the Bible
with Rick Henson

God's Promise of Faithfulness • Psalm 89: 1-2, 5-8, 15-18

"What have I to dread, what have I to fear, leaning on the everlasting arms? I have blessed peace with my Lord so near, leaning on the everlasting arms."

Sitting with fellow believers on a carefree Sunday morning, it's easy to sing such words. However, when Monday arrives (your computer gives you a blue screen, the milk for the kid's cereal is sour, and you drop your keys in your coffee while settling in the car), how much "blessed peace" do you feel? And these are minor annoyances. Let's say you won't need all those files on your computer, as you're told to clean out your desk at work; your youngest child is being bullied at school, necessitating a meeting with the principal; and on the way home, you broadside a vehicle that ignored a red light.

Perhaps you've faced some seasons of life like that, or maybe you're going through a horrendous storm right now. God seems distant. Why isn't He coming to your rescue? You know He's faithful, but you'd sure love some practical evidence! If these thoughts resonate with you, take heart! The next six lessons based on the theme, "Stand Strong", are designed to strengthen your God-confidence by delving into a multi-faceted study of His promises. We'll examine God's promise of faithfulness, of eternal life, of provi-

sion, of answered prayer, of victory, and of a new home.

In today's Scripture focus, Ethan the Ezrahite begins Psalm 89 with a song in his heart: "I will sing of the Lord's great love forever (vs 1)." The Lord's faithfulness had been revealed to him, and he wished to recount it to others. The Hebrew word for faithfulness - *emunah* - means "firmness, fidelity, steadfastness, steadiness." In the first two verses, the psalmist combines God's attributes of faithfulness and love - a mighty, encouraging combination!

In verses 5-8, Ethan gives praise as he surveys the work of God's hands. "The heavens praise your wonders, O Lord," he proclaims (vs 5). We can imagine him taking in God's creative handiwork, and being awed by the incredible diversity, beauty and power he saw. I can relate to that; a friend's family was on vacation in the northwest recently, and the oldest son snapped a photo of a wide expanse of jagged gorges, sprawling tree-lined cliffs, dis-

tant glorious mountains, and fluffy white clouds. It took my breath away, and a feeling of peaceful worship enveloped me. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands," David reminds us in Psalm 19:1.

Verses 6-8 of our focal passage remind us that no created thing or being compares to the Lord: "You are mighty, O Lord, and your faithfulness surrounds you (vs. 8)." Just observing our incredible world and the delicate balance of nature faithfully upheld by God's indescribable plan and power can do much to settle our fears.

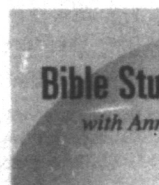
After spending a few more verses recounting God's might power in the natural realm, Ethan shifts his focus to declaring God's spiritual blessings. Note some of the words he uses: "blessed", "light of your presence" (vs 15); "rejoice", "exult" (vs 16); "glory and strength", "favor" (vs 17); and "shield" (vs 18). We who follow the Lord today can put our names in place of "they" and "their" in these verses!

There are, however, more verses in Psalm 89. The tone changes to one of lament in verses 38-51, as the writer candidly declares, that, yes, sometimes we don't see God's hand. Things aren't going as we expect or wish. Life is messy and downright painful at times. However, the author's confidence is evidently buoyed as he reconsiders what he knows and has recounted in the first part of the psalm. He ends with a resounding "Praise be to the Lord forever! Amen and Amen (vs 52)."

So what can we take away from this lesson? One, that God has shown Himself abundantly faithful (see also 1 Kings 8:56). And recalling His faithfulness can strengthen our belief that He is in control (Romans 8:28). Also, it's acceptable to openly share our frustrations and feelings with our loving heavenly father, but in the end, He deserves and desires us to show our confidence by offering Him praise.

A good faith-building exercise could involve beginning a "thankfulness journal". Morning and evening, write down some blessings you've experienced. Keep these jottings where you can see them. As your list grows, so will your trust in God's faithfulness.

Ann Maniscalco is a member of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Ocean Springs.



Bible Studies for Life
with Ann Maniscalco



RELEASED

cont. from p. 1

Michael's arrest, and on Jan. 20 published the first account of Reith's arrest.

"Thank you very much, Morning Star News, for your great role which led to our release from jail," Reith said.

Reith and Michael were convicted of lesser charges and released on the time they had served. Reith was con-

victed of "establishing or participating in a criminal organization," while Michael was convicted of "disturbing public peace."

Michael was arrested after encouraging Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church. Reith was arrested after submitting a letter from SSPEC leaders inquiring about the whereabouts of Michael.

Harassment, arrests, and persecution of Christians

have intensified since the secession of South Sudan in July 2011, when Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir vowed to adopt a stricter version of Sharia Islamic law and recognize only Islamic culture and the Arabic language.

Sudanese citizens have lived under oppressive conditions since the government was overrun by Muslim extremists who established a totalitarian dictatorship.

The Sudanese Minister of Guidance and Endowments announced in April 2013 that no licenses would be granted for building new churches in Sudan, citing a decrease in the South Sudanese population.

Sudan since 2012 has expelled foreign Christians and bulldozed church buildings on the pretext that the property belonged to South Sudanese. Besides raiding Christian bookstores and arresting Christians, authorities

threatened to kill South Sudanese Christians who do not leave or who do not cooperate in locating other Christians.

Due to its treatment of Christians and other human rights violations, Sudan has been designated a country of particular concern by the U.S. State Department since 1999, and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended in 2015 that the country remain on the list.

LifeWay Research: Is suicide 'epidemic' in America?

AMONG AMERICANS

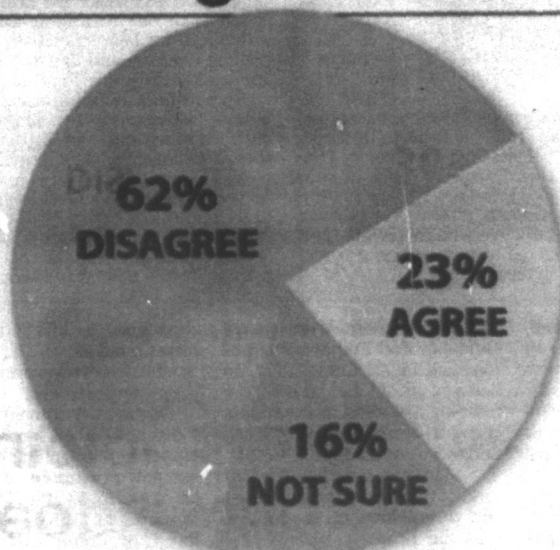
People who commit suicide are selfish



LifeWay

AMONG AMERICANS

People who commit suicide go to hell



Note: Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.

LifeWay

NASHVILLE (BP) — Many Americans believe they are seeing an epidemic in the United States of people taking their own lives, but most Americans also don't view suicide as a selfish choice and don't believe it sends people to hell, a LifeWay Research study shows.

"Americans are responding with compassion to a tragedy that touches many families," said Scott McConnell, LifeWay Research vice president. "For example, as researchers learn more about the effects of mental illness, people may be more likely to react to suicide with mercy."

LifeWay Research is a division of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, headquartered in Nashville.

Epidemic or not?

In a phone survey of 1,000 Americans, LifeWay Research found more than a 36% have had a friend or relative commit suicide, and 56% describe suicide as an epidemic in the U.S. The study, released Aug. 21, is based on a survey conducted Sept. 26-Oct. 5, 2014.

Concern is highest among the oldest half of the millennial generation, those 25-34 years old. This age group is more likely than others to perceive an epidemic of suicide (66%), say suicide is selfish (45%), and believe those who commit suicide go to hell (27%), matching 35-44 year olds).

Federal data show suicides have been on the rise since 2005. This is not unprecedented, as suicide rates were almost as high in the mid-1980s. Globally, the U.S. isn't even in the top 50.

Among 25- to 34-year-olds, though, suicide is the second leading cause of death. "In a young and generally healthy population, it's understandable this would be a concern. Many millennials will know of friends and acquaintances who have either committed suicide or been impacted by those who have," McConnell said.

Going to hell?

Twenty-three percent of the survey subjects say people who take their own lives go to hell. More than six in 10 Americans say suicide does not lead to hell, and 16% are not sure. Christians (27%), and particularly evangelicals (32%), are more likely than others to believe suicide leads to damnation.

Catholics believe more firmly than Protestants that suicide does not send people to hell, with 63% of Catholics and 54% of Protestants taking that stance. Protestants (19%) are more likely to indicate they don't know whether people who commit suicide go to hell compared to Catholics (12%).

"The finality of suicide makes people wonder about its consequences," McConnell said. "Most churches teach suicide is wrong, but many also acknowledge God's mercy and sovereignty."

Thirty-six percent say people who commit suicide are selfish. The number rises for Christians (39%) and particularly for evangelicals (44%).

LifeWay Research also found differences by race. One-fourth of African-Americans say a friend or family member has committed suicide, compared to 39% of whites. African-Americans are more likely than others to believe suicide is selfish (44%) and sends people to hell (38%). In comparison, 19

Methodology

The phone survey of Americans was conducted Sept. 26-Oct. 5, 2014. The calling utilized random digit dialing. Sixty percent of completes were among landlines and 40% among cell phones. Maximum quotas and slight weights were used for gender, region, age, ethnicity, and education to more accurately reflect the population. The completed sample is 1,000 surveys. The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.5%. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups. Those labeled evangelicals consider themselves "a born again, evangelical, or fundamentalist Christian."

% of whites and 25% of Hispanics say people who commit suicide go to hell.

Mentally ill?

Americans were disconcerted by last year's suicide of comedian Robin Williams, McConnell noted. Williams hanged himself in August.

"Experts say mental illness affects 90% of people who die by suicide," McConnell said. "Robin Williams fit that pattern. Before he died, he had been seeking treatment for depression."

Suicide and mental illness have been taboo topics in many churches, McConnell said. In previous studies by LifeWay Research, two-thirds of Protestant pastors said they speak to their churches about mental illness once a year or less, and 65% of family members of someone with mental illness say churches should do more to talk about mental illness so the topic is not so taboo.

In recent years, some have begun speaking out. McConnell said Saddleback Church pastor Rick Warren has spoken publicly about the suicide death of his son Matthew, and Frank S. Page, president of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, wrote a book about his daughter Melissa's suicide.

"I deeply appreciate Lifeway conducting this research and releasing these findings," Page said. "I think it does point to positive changes in the way people perceive this issue. However, we have a long way to go as believers and churches as we encourage people who struggle with mental illnesses."

"We must continue to be people of patience, compassion, and competency as we point people to the hope and help they can find in Christ. We must also continue to encourage hurting people to seek out truly Christian psychological assistance."

Page appointed a Mental Health Advisory Group in response to a motion on mental health ministry and a resolution on mental health concerns introduced at the 2013 Southern Baptist annual meeting. Since then, the group has reported and advised him on ways of better informing Southern Baptists about available mental health service providers and resources.

McConnell noted, "For too long, many Christians have viewed mental illness as a character flaw rather than a medical condition. It's encouraging to see the culture begin to change. Open discussion of suicide and mental health in churches can make the difference of life or death."